

THE
Mystery of the New Fashioned
GOLDSMITHS
OR
BANKERS.

THEIR
Rise, Growth, State, and Decay,

Discovered in a

Merchant's Letter

To a

Country Gent.

Who desired to bind his Son Apprentice to a

GOLDSMITH.

Printed in Year 1676.

County Galt.

McGehee's Geese.

GOLDSMITH.

BANKERS.

King, Thomas, Esq., New London.

McGehee's Geese.

GOLDSMITH.

Printed in York 1626.

The Mystery of the New Fashioned GOLDSMITHS, &c.

SIR,

Since you are pleased to demand my advice in the disposal of your Son to the *Goldsmiths* Trade, and my opinion of the Trade it self; I must trouble you more than I was willing to set down what I have observed of the *Goldsmiths* since I have Traded, and the steps of their Rise and Progress, and leave the judgment of the whole to your Self; 'tis but fit that a Son should owe the good choice of his employment and way to his fortunes to the prudence and love of his Father.

If I could now discourse you, I ought to be satisfied whether you have thoughts to put your Son to a *Goldsmith* of the Old or New Fashion, those of that profession having of late years wholly changed their way of Trading. In my time their whole employment was to make and sell Plate, to buy forreign Coyns and Gold and Silver imported to melt and cull them, and cause some to be coyned at the *Mint*, and with the rest to furnish the *Refiners*, *Plate-makers*, and *Merchants*, as they found the price of gold and silver to vary, and as the Merchants had occasion for Forreign Coyns.

But about Thirty years since, the Civil Wars giving opportunity to Apprentices to leave their Masters at will, and the old way having been for Merchants to trust their Cash in one of their Servants custody, many such Cashiers left their Masters in the lurch and went to the Army, and Merchants knew not how to confide in their Apprentices; then did some Merchants begin to put their Cash into *Goldsmiths* hands to receive and pay for them, (thinking it more secure) and the trade of Plate being then but little worth, most of the Nobility and Gentry, and others melting down their old Plate rather then buying new, and few daring to use or own Plate, the *Goldsmiths* sought to be the *Merchants* Cash-keepers to receive and pay for nothing, few observing or conjecturing their profit they had for their pains.

It happened about that time that the then Parliament had coyned out of Plate, and otherwise seven Millions in Half-Crowns, and no Mills being then used in the Mint, the Money was of a very unequal weight, sometimes two pence or three pence in an ounce difference, & the French and others then changing the value of their Coins often, which made silver and gold of much greater value abroad then at our English Mint: The Goldsmiths found a new Mischievous trade to send all the money trusted in their hands into their Cocklofts, where they had Scales and various Weights adapted for their purpose, and servants constantly weighed every half-crown (at least) and sorted them to melt for Two pence or three pence, or sometimes less gain by the ounce, and sometimes their advantage being greater by the accidents of the rise or fall of the exchange, those heaviest Coins were sent way in specie, several French men and other Merchants making it their whole and only business weekly to transport the gold and silver so culled, either melted down or in specie; and from hence the Goldsmiths set up another new Trade of buying the old English gold coin at a rate much above its Lawful coyned value, buying and selling it at five, seven, eight and ten pounds in the hundred more then it was coyned for, still sending it away so fast, or supplying those with it whose busines was to Transport it, that by a modest computation eight parts of ten of the coyn'd Gold was suddenly consumed, and two shillings a piece was commonly given for gold, when a penny a piece was often given before to exchange gold into silver; the Seven Millions also of silver new Coyned, was apparantly reduced to less then one Million, and the people so abused in their money, that there was little Coin passed in trade but overworn, waned, and clipt, to the great vexation and loss of the Traders.

These unlawful practices and profits of the Goldsmiths, made them greedy to ingross all the Cash they could, and to combine with all mens Servants who continued to keep any Cash, to bring their moneys to them to be culled, and to remain with them at four pence the day interest *per centum* without the Masters privity: And having thus got Money into their hands, they presumed upon some to come as fast as others was paid away, and upon that confidence of a running Cash (as they call it) they began to accommodate men with moneys for Weeks and Months upon extraordinary gratuities, and supply all necessitous Merchants that over traded their Stock, with present Money for their Bills of Exchange, discounting sometimes double, perhaps treble interest for the time as they found the Merchant more or less pinched.

Profit arising by this Trade, some of them who had the highest Credit, undertook to receive Gentlemen's Rents as they were returned to Town, and indeed any Man's money, and to allow them some interest for it though it lay for a month only, or less, the Owners calling for it by a hundred or fifty pounds at a time as their occasions and expences wanted it; this new practice giving hopes to every body to make Profit of their money until the hour they spent it, and the conveniency as they thought, to command their money when they pleased, which they could not do when lent at interest upon personal or real Security; These hopes I say, drew a great Call into these new Goldsmiths hands, and some of them stuck to their old Trade, but every of them that had friends and credit, aspired to this new Mystery to become Bankers or Cashiers, and when Cromwell usurped the Government, the greatest of them began to deal with him to supply his wants of Money upon great Advantages especially after they had bought those Dollers whereof he robb'd the Spaniards to about the value of 300000l.

After the King's return he wanting money, some of these Bankers undertook to lend him not their own but other men's money, taking barefaced of Him ten pound for the hundred, and by private contracts many Bills, Orders, Tallies, and Debts of the King's, above twenty, and sometimes thirty in the hundred, to the great disonor of the Government.

This Prodigious unlawful Gain induced all of them that could be credited with moneys at interest to become lenders to the King to anticipate all the Revenue, to take every Grant of the Parliament in o pawn as soon as it was given, I had almost said, before the Act was passed for it, and to outrie each other in buying and taking to pawn, Bills, Orders, and Tallies, in effect, all the King's revenue passed their hands, and if Solomon be in the right, that the Borrower is a Slave to the Lender, the King and Kingdom became Slaves to these Bankers, and the Kingdom gave no small share of their Taxes to them, paying double and treble Interest, as if they had not been able to raise Money for the publick Service at the times it was requisite.

But the number of these Bankers increased so fast, and the money at Interest come so much into their hands, that the King and His Farmers, and all Tallies of Anticipation and Orders, could not secure all the money they had to lend. Hereupon they sought out according to their several natural wits and capacities, how to dispose of money for more then lawful.

lawful Interest, either upon Pawns or Bottom, Reason or unreasonable discounts of Interest for Bills, or upon notorious usurious Contracts, or upon personal Securities from Heirs whose Estates are in expectancy, or by sudden advance of money to Projectors, who drawn into Projects many Responsible Men to the ruin of their Families; These Goldsmiths however getting 10l. or 15l. per Centum, and sometimes more, only for the present advance of the money, besides the future Interest, These and a hundred other practices they have used and do still continue in contempt of Law and Justice, whereof they are so conscious to themselves, that most of them do once a year (at least) sue out their general Pardon to avoid the penalty of those wholsome Laws made to prevent such Frauds, Oppressions, contempt of Government, and mischeives to the Publick as they are dayly guilty of: Tis also suspected that their original Trade of culling the heavy Money is not deserted by some of them; also how come all clipt and washt money to pass so currant at their Shops, and so little appearance in payments of all the new coyned Money since the King's return, so many 100000 ls. of the Parliaments Coin, besides Bullion imported having been new coyned, and how comes Guinnes also to be bought and sold by them so much above the Coynage rate, that upon their account only, and by their means, they pass currant in payments for more then they are really worth from some of their Shops; I am sure some Merchants are suppiyed with Gold and Silver English Coyn, to transport upon the advantage of the exchange, or making their present Bargains in France and elsewhere, for importing Prohibited Goods.

SIR,

I have given you my Remarkes upon the Rise and growth of these new kind of Goldsmiths, and I take them to have been in their highest Ascendant or State about the time that our Ships were burnt at Chatham by the Dutch: that cold Storm of the Peoples fears that their money was not safe in the Bankers hands blighted them, and since being in their declension, the Famous stop upon the Exchequer almost blasted their very root, men being unwilling to trust money in their hands to lend his Majestie, so long as they hear the deplorable Cryes of the Widdow and the Fatherless, whose money they say at Feasts, they lent the King, and cannot repay them, no not their Interest to buy them Bread.

Now

Now admitting that all the Creditors of the Bankers can no more think it safe that their money should be lent to the King, since Tallies, Orders, and the Great Seal it self, are found to be no security, I cannot imagine how Bread should be got by their trade of borrowing money upon lawful Intrest to lend upon unlawful to private persons, though they can silence their consciences and forget Christianity, and neither regard their neighbors welfare, nor the good of the whole Kingdom, but seek by Usurious unlawful Bargains, and oppressive Exactions from the needy and men in streights, and by hook and by crook to make the most of their Cash.

I dare take it for granted that the men now of that Trade are not men of greater natural Abilities nor acquired parts; then other Tradesmen of their age and degree, nor are they better instructed then others to imploy greater Stocks in an advantageous Trade; nor have they greater Stocks of their own to hazard to remote places, from whence most profit may be hoped for; Neither have these men greater skill in Law then other Citizens, to judg of Securities to be taken for Money; nor have they more knowledg of Men to guess at the value of their Bonds, how then should they be able to make more Intrest of money then other Traders; yet the profit that may satisfy other Traders, cannot be sufficient for them to keep open their Shops; they must have a great dead Stock of Cash to answer all Payments, and be always ready occasionally to advance great Summs; their Servants and Shops must be maintained for no use but Payments and Receipts, and deducting dead Stock and Charges, if they do not take ~~more~~ ^{more} Intrest for what they Lend and dispose of, they cannot make one of one, much less subliss. Besides there must be allowance for Charges to defend themselves against Informers for their usurious Contracts, and procuring frequent Pardons, and for hazard of loss of their Money lent upon unlawful Intrest, every borrower having it in his power to plead their usury against them in due of their Debts. All these things, and many more being duly considered, I suppose people will suddenly come to their wits, and begin to examine why a Goldsmith-banker should be better Security then another man, or fitter to be trusted for ten times more then he is worth: They give only personal Security, and many times their Notes for 500l. 1000l. or more, when they owe before they give that Note, twenty times the value of their own Estates, and yet these free Lenders will scarce be satisfied with two or three Mens Bonds for 1000l. that are known to be worth 5000l. a Man; doubtless I say, People will think at last that a

Banker ought to give as good Security for money he borrows as another man, especially since he runs the greatest hazards in his dispoling of Money for excessive Gain or interest.

I leave it then to your self to judg whether Banking be like to continue half your Son's Apprenticelhip, and whether all the Arts that they can teach him can be worth one of the 200l. you design to give with him: I presume upon your Pardon for my plainness and redibutness. Yet I am prompted to say somthing more in point of Conscience, doubting whether it be Lawful to exercise any Trade in a constant avowed breach of the Laws of the Kingdom, as all Bankers do, these Laws being made for the good of the Society, to which the Scripture commands obedience for Conscience sake, where they are met contrary to the Laws of God.

Perhaps it is worth the inquiry upon that account, whether any man that hath exercised the Mystery of Banking, hath living or dying, gone off the Stage with a clear good Estate, all his Creditors being paid, fully paid. But I judg no Man, I submit these thoughts and my Self to

Your Prudent Censure, and remain,

Sir,

Your Humble Servt

J. R.

P I N I S.

